Outcome of WTO and world Economic Forum Conference

296. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the outcome of the W.T.O. Conference held in Seattle of America from November, 30 to December 3, 1999; and

(b) what is the outcome of the World Economic Forum Conference held at Davos in the last week of January, 2000?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) Due to lack of consensus amongst the WTO members, it was decided to suspend the work of the Seattle Ministerial Conference of WTO without any Ministerial Declaration. The Chairperson of the Conference requested the Director General of WTO to hold consultations with member countries to discuss creative ways to bridge the remaining areas in which consensus did not exist and prepare the way for a successful conclusion.

(b) The World Economic Forum meeting provides a venue for informal discussions between world leaders on matters of current topical interest relating to finance, business and economics. The main focus of discussion in the current year related to globalization. India had made use of this forum to project the enormous opportunities and very conducive atmosphere as exists in India for Foreign Direct Investments.

Legislation for trade-related intellectual property rights

297. SHRI RAMACHANDRAIAH RUMANDLA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether legislations pertaining to the Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) have since been finalised for introduction; and

(b) if so, the action taken to protect our plant varieties and substances of the geographical origin in India?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Under the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), India has to meet certain obligations by 1.1.2000. The legislations regarding trademarks, copyrights and geographical indications have already been passed by the Parliament in the Winter Session 1999. A Bill for amendment to the Patents Act, 1970 and a Bill for providing protection to plant varieties and farmers rights, were introduced in the Winter Session of the Parliament in 1999 and are before the respective Joint Committees of the Parliament. The legislation relating to Semi-conductor Integrated Circuits Layout Design was also introduced and is now before the Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and

Technology, Environment and Forests. A Bill to amend the Designs Act, 1911 has already been passed by the Rajya Sabha in the Winter Session, 1999.

Increase in imports/exports

298. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether imports/exports have shown rising trend during the last six months;

(b) if so, the extent of increase; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to curb imports and increase exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics provisional data, the exports have increased to US $ 27419.23 million during April—Dec. 1999 from US $ 24279.08 million during the same period last year registering an increase of 12.93%. Imports have also increased to US $ 34457.91 million during April—Dec. 1999 from US $ 31607.50 million during 1998-99 showing an increase of 9.02%.

(c) A large portion of our imports are necessary to sustain economic growth. A number of steps have been taken to accelerate exports which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation, simplification of procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions.

WTO negotiations on services and farm produce tariff

299. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether WTO propose to reopen the negotiations on services and farm produces tariff;

(b) Whether Government agreed for another round of negotiations on these issues; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefore and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The Negotiations on Services and Agriculture are mandated negotiations under the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) which are part of the WTO Agreements